DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 338 801 CE 052 121

AUTHOR Poole, Vicki A.
TITLE Education for Employment: The Ultimate School-Business Partnership.
INSTITUTION Wisconsin State Dept. of Public Instruction, Madison.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 7p.; For related documents, see ED 303 625 and CE 052 120.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Advisory Committees; Basic Skills; *Career Development; Career Education; Cooperative Programs; Education Work Relationship; Elementary Secondary Education; *Employment Potential; Institutional Cooperation; *Job Skills; Public Education; *School Business Relationship; State Legislation; *State Programs; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *Education for Employment Program WI; Partnerships in Education; *Wisconsin

ABSTRACT

Having determined that neither traditional vocational education nor basic skills alone prepare students adequately for jobs and lifelong learning, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted an Education for Employment Standard that required every school district to form a school-business partnership council. The council's purpose is to guide the integration of the practical application of basic skills and economics, an understanding of business operations and the need for employability skills and attitudes, and knowledge of careers and labor market trends into the K-12 curriculum. What makes Wisconsin's Education for Employment Standard unique is that all students from kindergarten through grade 12 receive instruction and experiences in these elements: (1) business and education partnerships; (2) school-supervised work experiences; (3) employability skills and attitudes; (4) career exploration and planning; (5) practical application of basic skills; and (6) business operations and economics. The community becomes the classroom as business and education partnerships extend beyond the school walls. The Wisconsin Education for Employment Standard refocused the mission of public education by recognizing the key role schools play in job preparation and economic development. (KC)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED338801

# EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT:

## The Ultimate School–Business Partnership

"The economic battles of the future will be won in the classroom."

Herbert J. Grover
Wisconsin State Superintendent

Neither traditional vocational education nor basic skills ALONE prepare students adequately for jobs and life-long learning.

What makes Wisconsin's education for employment standard unique is that ALL students from kindergarten through grade twelve receive instruction and experiences in these elements:

- business and education partnerships
- school supervised work experiences
- employability skills and attitudes
- career exploration and planning
- practical application of basic skills
- business operations and economics

The community becomes the classroom as business and education partnerships extend beyond the school walls.

Education for Employment refocused the mission of public elementary and secondary education by recognizing the key role schools play in job preparation and economic development.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

V A Poole

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG052121

## EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT:

## The Ultimate School–Business Partnership

The following article contains an overview of events and trends that led to Wisconsin's enactment of the Education for Employment standard (required in Wisconsin school districts). It was written by Vicki A. Poole, Education for Employment Consultant at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. *A Resource and Planning Guide to Education For Employment* is available through the Publications Department at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.*

Nearly every state in the nation has increased graduation requirements, and Wisconsin is no different. What is exceptional in Wisconsin is that the legislature not only increased "academic standards" but also enacted an Education for Employment Standard that required every school district to form a school/business partnership council. The council's purpose is to guide the integration of the practical application of basic skills and economics, an understanding of business operations and the need for employability skills and attitudes, and knowledge of careers and labor market trends into the K-12 curriculum.

### EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT: THE NEED

Competition, productivity, and economic development are today's national buzzwords. To understand "why," consider these facts: Two or three wage earners instead of one are needed to maintain a middle class standard of living, the gap between low and high paying jobs is widening, and the future existence of the middle class is questionable. The word "retraining" has been used to define what workers need, but retraining for what and by whom has not been clearly defined.

Through a variety of national reports, our schools were challenged and we became classified as a "nation at risk" in competing for the future. Identifying national economic problems is easy. Finding solutions, is not. Unfortunately, instead of long-range planning about what education is needed for work in the future, many states and schools adopted the attitude, "if some is good, more is better."

*Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; 125 South Webster, P.O. Box 7841; Madison, WI 53707.

Simple answers to complex problems were sought. More academic requirements and longer school days were added without assessing and defining the content needed.

## THE WISCONSIN INITIATIVE

Wisconsin also increased its graduation requirements. But along with increased academic requirements and longer school days, course content was challenged. Through the *Parker Project*,[1] business men and women were asked what they wanted, expected, and found lacking in entry-level employees. The skills and knowledge identified in the Parker Project as important for employees now and in the future were:

- applying and interviewing for a job
- good appearance
- understanding career ladders and advancement
- initiating, planning, directing their own work
- understanding the value and importance of work
- good work habits and attitudes
- human relations–getting along with others
- flexibility, learning new skills
- problem solving
- understanding business operations and the economic system
- strong spelling, writing, and verbal communication skills
- math
- reading, interpreting instructions
- computer literacy, applied
- technology (applied science, information processing)

As people from educational and business communities were brought together to define what the goal, mission, and content of Wisconsin's educational system should be, the concept of education for employment was created. *Education for employment refocused the mission of public elementary and secondary education by recognizing the key role schools play in job preparation and economic development.* Its primary purpose was

> to define and deliver what all youth need to become productive, economically self-sufficient citizens, thereby enabling them to contribute to Wisconsin's economic development.

[1]*Parker Project.* Research sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Parker Pen Company. Summaries available, contact: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Vicki Poole (608) 266-9897.

The concept of education youth for employment is not new. Most people automatically assume our schools have been doing this all along. But in examining the curriculum closer, it can be found that many students don't associate the need for basic skills with the working world. They don't understand WHY they are learning to read, write, and compute. A regional survey of Wisconsin students who were working was conducted. When the students were asked if they used basic skills on the job, 70 percent of them responded, "no." Apparently, students don't even understand when they are using basic skills.

Students in vocational classes learn employability and job seeking skills, but many students leave high school without taking vocational courses. The Parker Project found that *neither traditional vocational education nor basic academic programs ALONE prepare students adequately for jobs and life-long learning*. All students, including those entering post secondary education, need to be educated for eventual employment.

During the 1985–87 budget session, the Wisconsin state legislature responded to the research and recommendations of the Parker Project by enacting an Education for Employment Standard for school districts and creating the Governor's Council on Business and Education Partnerships. In considering what students need to be prepared for the future working world, the Education for Employment Standard identified seven critical elements:

- business and education partnerships
- school-supervised work experiences
- employability skills and attitudes
- career exploration and planning
- practical application of basic skills
- business operations and economics
- contemporary vocational education programs (9-12)

*What makes the Education for Employment Standard unique is that ALL students from kindergarten through grade twelve receive instruction and experiences in the education for employment elements*. The ultimate impact of this standard depends upon the vision and direction provided by the local partnership councils (each school district is required to form a local or regional partnership

council consisting of at least one-half business representatives). The council reviews labor market information and student follow-up studies to provide recommendations assuring relevancy in course content. Ideally, *the community becomes the classroom as business and education partnerships extend beyond the school walls*.

## OUR CHANGING FUTURE

Much of the success of the Education for Employment Standard will depend upon the ability of local communities and schools to react to change. It has been stated that there has been more change in the last twenty years than there was in the prior six hundred, and the next twenty years promise to bring even more change. Problems that used to take months or years to solve can now be solved in a matter of days or hours. Many of the jobs that will be available to students in the future *do not even exist today*. It is obvious that students cannot expect to be trained for specific jobs at the secondary level and then work at those jobs for the rest of their lives. Constant retraining will be a reality for future workers, and people will enter in and out of post secondary education as the need arises. Businesses often prefer not to have to train employees; consequently, a tremendous opportunity exists for post secondary institutions to interact with the business community and provide employee training.

Although education for employment was legislated as a public school district standard, its impact on post secondary education and the need for articulation should not be understated. Based upon the need for constant retraining in our future working environment, it is imperative that communities plan educational programs that provide for a smooth transition from secondary schools to technical colleges and/or universities. The purpose is *not* for training and education at one level to supplant the other. Instead, education at the post secondary level should enhance and build upon the skills and knowledge obtained at the secondary level. The local business and education partnership councils must include representation from technical colleges and universities to be successful since labor market information is the same for both.

As communities consider what the future working world will look like, thought must be given to predictions of technological change that will affect all disciplines. Following are some samples:

- farmers using genetically altered seeds capable of producing crops that do not require the use of pesticides
- voice-activated computers
- doctors capable of taking a "blueprint" of a patient's body and determining a patient's predisposition to certain genetic diseases; then, with a laser, destroying that particular gene and eliminating the genetic disease.[2]

Considering these examples, preparing our students for careers of the future is a mind-boggling challenge. The basics of science, English and math cannot be separated from vocational education. Knowledge gained in one subject area needs to be extended to other areas so students learn practical applications of theory and the interchange that exists from one discipline to another. The world is not divided into the same specific disciplines that school curriculums are divided. As technology continues to impact the working environment, students need to increase their ability to problem solve and think creatively by understanding the relationship between one body of knowledge and another.

## CONCLUSION

Wisconsin's Education for Employment Standard does not have all the answers in predicting what skills and knowledge are needed for the future working world. The crystal ball to the future is cloudy, not clear, and future challenges and opportunities are inevitable. Although ideas need to be debated and challenged, the time for change has come. The most appropriate changes will be found when business representatives and educators challenge each other and agree to face the future with open minds.

[2]Burrus, Daniel. Burrus Research Associates, Inc., P.O. Box 1354, Waukesha, WI 53187.